DOCUMENTARY NEWS LETTER

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WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

We are now entering on a period during which the Government Information Services of all kinds, and not least the visual media, must be reconsidered, and their means and methods of operation re-shaped. This country has emerged from World War II with a system of information which was virtually non-existent in 1939 (although in the film field at least the foundations had already been firmly laid), and, despite the screams of the more old-fashioned sects of journalism (e.g. the *Daily Express*), there can be no questioning the continuance of the system. But there is now an opportunity to get rid of the more unsatisfactory aspects of information machinery, and to provide more up-to-date methods. The approaching dissolution of the Ministry of Information, and the emergence of a Central Information Office in its place, provide the opportunity; and there are signs of goodwill from all parties concerned in seeking and applying new methods.

In previous issues of *D.N.L.* the successes and faults of the M.O.I. system over the war period has been perhaps sufficiently analysed. What is important at this stage is that the main principles of future organisation be properly assessed and analysed. In this connection John Grierson's visit to Britain at the request of the Government (to which we refer in a note of the month) is by no means irrelevant. A paper by him in which basic needs are summarised is now circulating in Government circles. This document is not for publication, but it is not, we are sure, improper to indicate that it briskly summarises the root-causes of the difficulties which have beset the information services.

The basic problem is of course a problem of liaison—liaison, that is, between the necessary administration of national monies on the one hand, and the equally necessary creative work of the film-makers on the other. During the past years, and particularly during the past six months, the gulf between these two functions (which should be complementary) has been widening. It is a gulf which must be eliminated if good work is to be achieved with speed, efficiency and economy; it must indeed be eliminated if good work is to be achieved at all.

The reason for the gulf is basically that a *modus vivendi* has not been found between the civil servants and the creative workers or, to use a new Whitehall term, perhaps significant in itself, the "craftsmen". We are not among those who picture the scene as one of blacks versus white; of the saintlike artist in righteous rebellion against the reactionary civil servant. On the contrary, we believe that there are plenty of faults on both sides.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the necessary liaison between the two functions can never be achieved unless and until the creative side works on equal terms with the administrative side on the highest levels of policy, planning and responsibility. Hitherto the film-makers (experts and creators) have not found themselves represented at policy level. Vital questions of policy, and of administration relating to policy, have been discussed and decided without their collaboration. The result, in terms of ideology, in terms of finance, and in terms of economy and efficiency, has been a dichotomy between the two elements. This in time has led to a feeling among the makers that the essential responsibilities of their job have been removed from them. It is only a short step from that feeling to a mood of irresponsibility.

During the next few months, when the new C.I.O. has to be moulded (for the Prime Minister's statement was couched in terms carefully vague), it is essential that the closest attention be paid to ensuring a close liaison between administrator and creator. In this sense liaison demands an understanding of departmental information needs, of film-making itself, and of the specific financial and administrative controls essential to any work carried out with national funds. Thus the officers carrying out the liaison functions must have a knowledge not only of creative problems and techniques but also of civil service requirements.

This means that the civil service on the one hand must willingly accept the creative role on a much higher level than tradition and dyed-in-the-wool concepts have hitherto permitted. On the other hand that the creative workers must be willing to shoulder the basic responsibilities of work in the public service to a degree which in the past has been if not impossible at any rate unattractive. It means, in fact, that the responsible figures inside the information set-up must, at a high level, command equal confidence from both creator and administrator; for which reason the word liaison is especially significant.

There is no doubt that if this basic principle is accepted and applied, many of the irksome difficulties and intricacies of detail (finance, departmental delays, confused briefing and equally confused scripting, lack of planning and provision, etc.) will be all the easier of solution.

The approaching demise of the M.O.I. has recently been sharply indicated by the resignation of Jack Beddington from the Directorship of the Films Division. Whatever the degree to which the documentary people may have from time to time crossed swords with Beddington during his six years at the M.O.I. there can be nothing other than unanimity in their recognition of the job he has done. Under conditions often of the utmost difficulty he has kept up a high level of production and distribution; he has commanded the

confidence of the film trade as a whole; and he has shown a special genius for permitting his staff to act on their own initiative, and, more importantly, has backed their actions.

It has been announced that his post is not to be filled during the interim period between now and the evolution of the new C.I.O. The gap he leaves poses, in fact, the problem, and we can perhaps pay him no greater compliment than in emphasising that fact.

Meantime Basil Wright has resigned from the post of producer in charge of the Crown Film Unit, which he had held since January, 1945. No reason for this move has been published, but it is thought that his resignation arose specifically from a desire to emphasise the liaison problem to which we have referred. However that may be, it is significant that he has now been appointed consultant to Films Division during the coming period. This in itself is a sign that the higher levels of the Civil Service, represented more particularly in this instance by Sir Eric Bamford, Director-General of the M.O.I., are anxious to find means of ensuring the proper establishment of the liaison role.

It is also said—though no statement has been made as we go to press—that a committee has been set up at the M.O.I. to report and make recommendations on the procedure and organisation of the visual information service under the C.I.O. It appears that this committee will be representative of creators and administrators on equal terms—numerically as well as otherwise. If this is so, we congratulate the Director-General in double measure for a further step towards ensuring that every opportunity be given to all parties concerned in the creation of an information service worthy of the tasks before it.

It is to be hoped that the committee will be empowered to co-opt, or to seek evidence from various bodies such as A.C.T. and the Federation of Documentary Film Units, as well as from individuals at present not inside the Civil Service but with special knowledge of informational techniques and needs. The moment is ripe for constructive and far-sighted measures.

NOTES OF THE MONTH

THAT THE Government should have invited John Grierson to Britain to advise them on film problems is a fact of considerable significance. Grierson's presence in this country at the period when the setting up of the new Central Information Office is under urgent consideration has been welcomed by all sensible people in the fields of film and of education. Looking further forward, we note with satisfaction that Grierson's main preoccupation is now to be in the international field—a logical and essential extension of the purpose and practice of Documentary. The triumphant success, and electrifyingly rapid development of the National Film Board of Canada were due to Grierson's far-sighted planning and administration based on all that was possible in the earlier experience of documentary in this country. There are now many active centres of documentary in Europe and in the New World. The co-ordination of their work to international purposes is a job in which no one is better fitted than Grierson. It is already known that a major part of his plans involves the creation of a regular output of films on international events and affairs; and it is obvious that such an output will establish on world screens a clear exposition of the purposes and activities of the United Nations. In these activities Grierson will have the fullest backing from everyone in this country.

Two-way Traffic Wanted

IF OUR EUROPEAN colleagues and allies are to support our films on the Continent, it is obvious that we must reciprocate by helping Continental films to circulate in Britain and to reach the kind of audience for which they are intended. So far as we know neither the M.O.I. nor the British Council has done anything to encourage this two-way traffic and has afforded no one the opportunity of seeing the best work from France, Denmark, Holland or Czechoslovakia. A centre must be set up, either by the British Council or the Ministry of Information or by both, to which our film colleagues overseas can look for help and encouragement. It is not only reciprocity that is needed; our system of overseas film representation needs overhauling. The M.O.I. officers are mainly legacies of the SHAEF film fiasco. Of the original appointments, some proved to be collaborators and had to be got rid of in a hurry; others have crawled back into one hole or another; most of the remainder seem ignorant of, or even hostile to, the film as a medium of culture. British Council film officers seem to regard themselves less as cultural film ambassadors than as salesmen of British Council films. The scientific film conference in Paris provides a case in point. According to the printed programme the Ministry of Information officers had supplied the excellent *Surgery in Chest Diseases*, but had not attempted to put a representative British programme on the screen. Almost by accident The Scientific Film Association was able, with the help of the Ministry of Information's London offices, to send a representative to Paris, who was able to screen *World of Plenty* and *Potato Blight*. From French press reports and other information from French sources it would seem that the former film captured the conference, though neither government agency on the spot had the wit to realise its potential importance. It is time that both the M.O.I. and the British Council developed a sense of responsibility in these matters.

M.O.I. Please Note

THE BRITISH COUNCIL writes: "Under *Notes of the Month* in the last issue of D.N.L., you chide the M.O.I. for not recording films in Afrikaans. It is perhaps worth while letting you know that all Council films that go to South Africa are recorded in Afrikaans as well as in English." If the British Council finds it worth while to put their films into Afrikaans, the M.O.I. behaviour in not doing so seems more inexplicable than ever.

Comings and Goings

GEOFFREY BELL has left the Shell Film Unit and joined Film Centre, moving from documentary direction to production. He was at Shell from 1937–1945. Bell is Hon. Secretary of the London Scientific Film Society and Council Member of the Scientific Film Association. Another new recruit to Film Centre is George Bennell, M.A., B.Sc., M.R.S.T., who is to develop an Education Section. Bennell comes from University College School with a wide experience of the use of visual aids. In 1928 he began making films for athletics and O.T.C. training; during the last few years he has greatly extended the use of audio-visual material in the teaching of General Science.

The documentary world generally is conscious of the need for expert advice from the teaching profession in developing classroom film techniques, and Realist Film Unit are to be congratulated on the arrival of Miss Dorothy Grayson, B.Sc., who has joined them as Educational Film Producer in collaboration with John Taylor. Her work at the British Film Institute was one of the more distinguished of that organisation's activities.

We wish Miss Grayson and Mr. Bennell every success in the very important and difficult jobs which they have undertaken.

FILMS FOR CHILDREN

(The special Saturday morning cinema shows for children have for a long time been a matter of great concern to all those interested in the influence of the film on the youth of this country. We therefore welcome the recent article in "The Times" on this subject and gratefully acknowledge the Editor's permission to reprint it in full.)

In the course of a sociological inquiry into the film in British life your Correspondent spent a score of Saturday mornings in Odeon and Gaumont-British children's cinema clubs in three widely different parts of the country. Each time he sat among the children in order to observe their behaviour, expressions, and attitudes. Sometimes his assistants came, too, to check his own observations; and he took children (and their mothers) with him whose home and school life he knew intimately.

Since the conduct of these clubs is guided by strict central directions, and since they receive their films from two central offices, the impressions derived from these visits may provide a reliable indication of the type of entertainment which will be offered to several hundreds of thousands of young children every week when the clubs resume their activities on a full scale. Children are enrolled in the clubs without any charge for membership, but pay 6*d.* or 9*d.* for each performance they attend. They appear to be admitted from the age of four or five, though the Gaumont-British clubs require children under seven to be accompanied by older ones. The clubs act to a certain extent as nurseries, especially in the poorer districts, affording working class mothers an opportunity for shopping on Saturday mornings.

The Gaumont-British clubs make an effort to enlist the collaboration of local education authorities, though the writer has seen no evidence of such outside expert influence in any of the clubs he has visited. The Odeon clubs, on the other hand, appear to be entirely run by the central office and the local managers. Those managers who like their work show considerable understanding and tenderness in dealing with all the problems which arise when large numbers of children are crowded together; other managers prefer to be correct and orderly and extinguish any child-like atmosphere in their club's proceedings.

A TYPICAL MATINEE

What happens at a typical children's *matinée*? Hundreds of children coming in see coloured (and usually crude) slides on the screen: "It pays if you say thank you and please", or "Odeon Billy wishes you not to push when you are waiting in a queue", and so forth. Then the club "hymn" is sung:—

To the Odeon we come
To have our fun . . .
We are thousands strong
So we can't be wrong

and more in similar vein. (The Gaumont-British clubs have no hymn.) Then follows the club promise—to obey one's parents, to be kind to animals, to make this country "a better place to live in"—and the singing of the National Anthem.

The performance begins. First, an animal cartoon picture, usually not a genuine Walt Disney product but one of those plagiarisms which copy Disney's technique but lack his taste. Next, a full-length picture. Occasionally good films, like *My Friend Flicka*, are shown, but it appears that "Westerns" or supposedly "comic" pictures of 10 or 15 years ago are usually considered appropriate for children. There are even films which antedate the familiar Tarzan pictures showing animals almost killing human beings in strangely absurd cinema landscapes; and some of the children are undoubtedly frightened and horrified. The writer's own son refused, after he and a friend of his—they were then nine—had attended two or three shows, to take further interest in his father's sociological curiosity.

Last comes the serial story of American origin, such as *Don Winslow of the Navy*. These films seem to have no coherent plot. A considerable amount of shooting goes on, with nerve-racking persecutions of the bad men who have kidnapped the beautiful innocent blonde secretary. To the children the serials are the high spot of the programme, but their psychological effects are deplored by psychological experts. As the writer sees it, the children are left at a high pitch of expectation for next week's show, with their daydreams poisoned and their play influenced by an utterly artificial unreality. And, whatever may be true of adults, it is extremely doubtful whether children appreciate the "good moral lessons" with which it is fashionable to conclude these films. From time to time good geographical or travel pictures are shown between the cartoons and the main film, but there are also films of another type.

CHILD PSYCHOLOGY

In the writer's opinion children under seven should not go to the cinema at all, even if accompanied, except on condition that special films for tiny ones are made, as they are understood to be made in Canada. But such films cannot be made without the effective assistance of child psychologists, the existence of whom appears so far not to have been discovered by the British film industry.

When your correspondent discussed this matter with those responsible for selecting the films, one person confessed that he was far from able to see all the films sent out to the children's clubs. Another argued, quite rightly, that the supply of films suitable for children is far from sufficient, though new children's films are being made which will in time replace those which are objectionable. The new films so far produced are, however, with perhaps one exception, unsatisfactory and insignificant, though evidently well-intended. Some people in the industry add that, anyway, their job is to provide "entertainment, not education". Yet it is not possible to provide entertainment divorced from moral and psychological norms. Even if it is intended to give nothing but "pure" entertainment, the child's power of visualisation creates moral patterns. As matters stand several hundreds of thousands of children will soon be constantly subject to an influence in this regard which is far below the level of the rules and standards of our educational system.

This is not the intention of those who run the clubs. But the task they undertake requires a high and most carefully organised spiritual, mental, and technical equipment. The film industry has reached a stage where the old "showman" type, however well meaning, must genuinely enlist the effective and whole-hearted co-operation of the social scientist, the educationist, the psychologist, and, last but not least, of the children themselves, and not merely make an outward show of doing so.

PUBLIC SUPERVISION

There is evident need for expert public supervision of the films shown to children, though the form of such supervision requires detailed examination. Certainly there is a case for the education authorities to intervene vigorously, employing full-time and well qualified persons to make their supervision effective. Only the best producers and directors should be concerned with the making of children's films, as is the practice most notably in Russia, from which there is much to be learned. Nor can it be said that films given a "U" certificate (for universal exhibition) by the British

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THE CHAIN AND THE LINKS

Impressions of a Film Officer in Latin America

(In Santiago, which is a large city, the Non-theatrical films organisation depends almost entirely for transport on a Chevrolet converted van. This is normally driven by a certain Señor Aveline López, who also ranks as head operator. Unfortunately, of López' three possible assistants, none is competent to drive the van; and during a recent period when López fell ill, the Films Officer himself took over his duties, as this seemed an admirable opportunity for a first-hand check on the work being done: it is one thing to supervise the work and obtain detailed reports, and quite another to see for oneself, on the spot. For this reason the following impressions, by the Films Officer, of his experiences may be of interest.)

NINETEEN-FORTY; a bright autumn day. Somewhere in London stands a man with a film camera. He is making a film about London Transport.[1] There is a blitz on; the atomic bomb is still a secret thing of the distant future, but a London blitz, 1940 vintage, is not a joke. An air battle goes on, out of sight, almost out of hearing, very far overhead. It leaves in the sky those curious white vapour trails, from aeroplanes in fast flight. The cameraman sees a chance for a good shot. He gets the vapour trails above the façade of a building, with a lamp in the foreground to give distance . . . from here, shift to an omnibus, a line of omnibuses; London Transport goes on, as the vapour trails very slowly dissolve.

The cameraman is the first link. Then come laboratory, titling, packing, dispatch . . . (torpedoes, a cold sea, perhaps death . . .).

And so we come to the last link in the chain.

* * *

Nineteen-forty-five. By the calendar, it is winter, or very early spring. By English standards, it might be summer. A big school, run by Canadian priests for eight hundred Chilean boys; only four hundred can fit into the hall at one time. The priests are kindly, but a little vague; the boys come tumbling in, clean, neatly dressed, but noisy as a kennelful of puppies. They squabble over seats. They crowd round the projector. They ask—the eternal question from schoolboys—"Have you brought a comic?" We haven't. We console them with stories of London Transport's railway trains. Lights out. But the talking and chattering by no means stop. The assistant operator, with much experience, tells me gloomily that "this is the worst school of the lot; we might as well show silent films". It is true that only those well up in front can hear the commentary . . . and none of them seem to be paying a great deal of attention . . . are we wasting our time? Is the last link too weak to carry the message which started, in London, in 1940?

As we go from London to Quebec,[2] from Quebec to Caen,[3] and back to England for a "Cinesports", I wonder about this. Leaving aside Quebec and Caen, and considering London . . . they have seen, at any rate, the tube trains, the buses, the trams; neatness, order, efficiency. They live, and many of them will continue to live, these boys, in Santiago, a city notable for the chaotic condition of its transport. Many of them have parents in the car-owning class—but even so. . . . We cannot even begin to underline the point. We cannot even whisper that British organisation, even in wartime, means you can get from place to place in relative comfort, whereas in Santiago, even in peacetime, it is too often a major battle to get on a tramcar. *Estames en Chile*. But even so ("Now boys, please go out *quietly*!")—even so, if just a few of these youngsters, the next time they try to climb on to a crowded omnibus remember fleetingly that "they do these things better in London", then, perhaps, we are not wasting our time.

Nineteen-forty-five. A Crown Film Unit camera outfit chasing the flying-bombs all over London to catch and film one as it falls[4]. . . .

And for the last link, let us go somewhere very different. Another school; but a school far from the centre of Santiago, a Chilean State school, a poor school for poor children in a poor street. There is nothing in way of an assembly hall here; there is, at the back of the ramshackle building, a "patio" . . . in England it might by courtesy be called a back-yard. Benches are brought. We seek some sort of electricity supply, and eventually find it in the "kitchen"—a wooden, lean-to shack separated from the main building, and remaining erect, presumably, through the sheer will-power of the cook. Many of the boys are dressed in little better than rags; but they crowd round the projector, just like their clean and well-dressed fellow-citizens in the other school, and . . . "Have you brought a comic?" One boy seems shy, but he wants to ask a question. He waits till we have connected up, and the rest are scrambling for seats. He is no better dressed than any of them, but: "Have you brought a newsreel showing the atomic bomb?" The better-dressed ones never asked that.

The best we can do for him, at the moment, is the flying bombs. But there is another contrast; these boys can hear as well as see what is being shown them. Before we start, the "director" of the school, a large man with a paunch who probably gets paid a salary slightly better than that of a junior typist in a commercial firm, gets to his feet: "Now boys, you are not in a theatre, nor is this a 'fiesta"; you are in school" (it is eight o'clock in the evening, and no one compelled these boys to stay behind). "There will be no shouting, or talking, or giggling; you will please behave yourselves." The "director" has personality; there is no trouble. Did he, perhaps, tell them about the atomic bomb? Or do they think for themselves, perhaps with their parents' help? . . . Here, at any rate, we are not wasting our time.

One could go on indefinitely; but it would become boring. Let us end with a few fleeting, and disconnected, impressions.

Girls are nearly always better behaved than boys (as regards film shows). We went to one State school for girls, a big modern school in a large, light, airy building. The assistant operator, on the way there, said: "This is one of the best places." I soon saw why, from his point of view; this school always has its shows at five o'clock, and they invite the operators to tea beforehand (coffee, really, but very good). This school has its shows in the gymnasium. The girls sit in rows on the floor. They are quite silent throughout; one cannot tell if they are interested, bored, or just well-disciplined. But as we packed up the apparatus afterwards, a group in a corner was practising a dance movement they had just seen in a physical-training film,[5] and getting it more or less right. At any rate they had not been asleep.

* * *

An open-air show, away at the back of beyond. An unpaved street, full of mudholes. The long-suffering van crawls over and through them to a dingy house indicated by my long-suffering assistant, and stops. It is instantly mobbed. "Peliculas . . . peliculas!" Assisted by far too many willing hands, we get out and set up the apparatus. Our initial audience is about a hundred and fifty; we project against the wall of a house across the road, and there is, as always with open-air shows, much climbing of ladders to obtain electricity from highly unlikely and dangerous places. Within ten minutes we have about a thousand people watching, in awed silence, the shots from the German concentration camps.[6]

The poorest people are always the most hospitable. The man at whose invitation we went insists that we have a glass of wine with him. We learn that all these people live quite a long way from the nearest cinema (and a fair way even from the nearest tramline); they will willingly stand for an hour in the street to see films. There are, in Santiago, more isolated spots like this than one supposes; and in fine weather they are among the best places to visit, from the point of view of results.

The "Cinesports" series is always remarkably popular. I have only heard one adverse comment. An elderly teacher at a girls' school suggested to me that possibly scenes of men boxing and wrestling were "a little brutal . . . not very good propaganda for the English, who after all were always *gentlemen*."

Señor Don Emilio Gonzalez, second-in-command of films and in charge of programmation and organisational details, lost a son at the hands of Franco's men in the Spanish Civil War. He will never tell anyone the details; but when he first saw B.O.N. 256 (concentration camps) he made a sort of vow with himself to show it to everybody in Santiago. At the present rate of progress he will probably succeed. Incidentally, this newsreel, when it first arrived on 35 mm., was censored here "adults only". In spite of this, we took a deliberate risk with the 16 mm. copy, and we show it everywhere we can. So far, we have never had even a suspicion of a complaint, although we show it in schools.

And so it goes on; modern, up-to-date schools, social and political clubs, ill-lit streets which are almost slums. The last link in the chain. Perhaps the other links would care to know that, as far as we can tell, the message does get through.

* * *

[1] City Bound
[2] Peoples of Quebec (Canadian)
[3] You Can't Kill a City
[4] V.1.
[5] Invitation to the Dance
[6] B.O.N. 256

THE DARTINGTON HALL FILM UNIT

An Educational Experiment

THE DARTINGTON HALL FILM UNIT was started in 1934 by the late William Hunter, a master at Dartington Hall School. There was at that time —and it is still true—very little in the way of even moderately good class-room films. Hunter felt that more information was needed about the kind of film that was useful in class-teaching: there was clearly no future for film regarded either as a substitute for the class-lesson, or as semi-entertainment—movie-jam to coat the class-room powder. What the teacher wanted was a technique of illustration to supplement the text-book, the spoken word or the blackboard. Hunter started to experiment with films in his own subject, geography.

He had certain advantages: technical knowledge, artistic flair, and the background of a progressive school and of an estate carrying on a number of rural industries associated with the geography of the region. He produced films that were successful teaching instruments; by 1940, about a dozen were in general circulation. By this time the Unit had grown out of the space available in the School, and it was transferred to the Arts Department, with an endowment of £400 a year. Further, Penguin Books Ltd. made a production grant towards a new series—Puffin Films—on agricultural topics. All this constituted a great advance on previous resources. But now the war drastically affected plans; it was not clear, with growing restrictions, to what extent the Unit would be able to continue.

Early in 1941 the Unit was asked by the newly-created Film Council of the South-West to undertake the management of a small educational film library. Petroleum Films Bureau increased this by adding their instructional films to it. At the same time the Ministry of Information was considering the formation of regional libraries for the circulation of their films, and decided to make use of the Unit.

Hunter's departure into the R.A.F. at the end of 1941 created a serious problem. His pioneer work was just beginning to make headway; if the Unit ceased to exist, the ground would be lost. It was decided to carry on, and at least keep the Unit alive until his return. His death in February, 1943 was an unexpected and irreparable disaster. But it seemed now even more important that the experience should not be wasted, and production has continued, not at the level that anyone would have thought ideal, but at the level that was possible in the existing man-power and material position. Productions to date total 24 films, in 40 reels. It is now clear that the Unit must as soon as possible get on to a more professional level than hitherto, still specialising in 16 mm. silent educational films of the type that its location makes peculiarly possible.

Up to 1940, weekly dispatches of D.H. films seldom reached double figures, and revenue was negligible. 1945 showed an income from sale and hire of close on £1,000, and for the first time the Unit could have paid its way without endowment or production grants. While there is probably no future—nor, in the writer's view, should there be—for an educational unit based on the sale and hire of prints, the revenue figures are of interest as an index of demand. The distribution of M.O.I. films has likewise expanded rapidly; the Unit now serves over 200 sound and 30 silent 16 mm. projectors in the region, and dispatches about 1,000 reels a month.

To sum up the experience of the past eleven years, there is first of all a considerable and unsatisfied demand for class-room films which are widely sought after even when they do not reach high technical quality in photography or direction. Secondly, an educational film unit need not be an expensive business; the quality of 16 mm. production can now be—though it still seldom is—as good as standard and the costs are almost absurdly small, even as compared with the modest scale of documentary. Finally, there is an advantage in a small production unit being linked with regional distribution. It can thus serve three related purposes. It can be an advisory centre, and since regional needs and preoccupations differ it is in many respects better able to give such advice than a central body; it can run a film library for schools and other organisations with their own projectors and run a mobile projector service on the M.O.I. model; it can undertake experiments, or produce specialised films at a cost that is within the

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CANADIAN COLOUR SCHEME

WHILE we have been jogging along filming everything in black and white, Canada, true to her history, has been blazing a new trail. Kodachrome sixteen millimetre is the tool she is using and a pretty dazzling one it is too. In fact it looks as though black and white films for non-theatrical showing might as well pack up. And if you think that this is exaggerating things a bit, just try seeing one of our films after seeing one from Canada. I am not suggesting that we should use colour for colour's sake but there is no doubt that the impact of a colour sub-standard is much greater than the equivalent black and white. The subject is more alive and the whole film more pleasant to watch.

At a representative showing the other day we saw *Flight of the Dragon*, a film on Chinese art, *Salmon Run*, a film about the rumbustiously named Sockeye salmon, *Face of Time*, a geological survey, *Life on the Western Marshes*, a film of bird life and an organisation with the odd name of Ducks Unlimited, *Eskimo Arts and Crafts*, which was about what the title said it was about and *Ski in the Valley of the Saints*, a tourist-come-hither piece. All of them were nice to look at, all were on Kodachrome and the whole affair was a great pleasure to the eye. I should say that during their making the cameramen had grappled with most of the major problems which one might meet in connection with colour. In the ski film there were interiors with a lot of colour which were successful except for the poor rendering of flesh tones. Attention to make-up will, in time, probably get over this. In the geology film there were laboratory interiors which came off very well. In the same film there had obviously been trouble with the maps. The different colours tended to obscure the wording, but they did not look as though they would have been very good maps in black and white anyway. In the film about salmon two problems were faced and overcome successfully. The exteriors shot at different places matched very well except for one shot of a Reckitts blue sea and, incidentally, the sea always seems a special problem for any colour system as anybody who saw Western Approaches will remember; in order to get individual salmon scuttering across the shallow water of the spawning grounds the cameraman had obviously had to snatch shoot and this did not seem to have upset anything very much. The major drawback to Kodachrome is that dissolves still have to be made in the camera or not at all, so, unless the picture is *following* the commentary very closely, there are some rather awkward bumps, especially from exteriors to maps, for instance.

Of course Kodachrome is nothing very new in the film arsenal but it would appear from these films that it is becoming a weapon of much greater precision and usability. It may be that cameramen are getting more experienced in the use of it (or that they still stow away thousands of feet of cut-outs in the vaults without telling anyone) but judging by the overall smoothness of the films we have seen, it presents no major obstacles to the would-be user. There is no sign that anyone is trying to use it dramatically but then I do not see that there is very much opportunity for this in the general rough and tumble of documentary film making. There's the subject in front of you and you have to make the best of the colour as you go along. Unless of course you want to emulate the gardeners in Alice in Wonderland. This of course brings us to the major defect of colour as far as documentary is concerned. It does tend to exaggerate all colours except pastel shades and thus, while it gives the picture an added interest, it also makes everything slightly unreal. Perhaps our tired eyes no longer see colours as they are and that they do in fact glow and shout and make a noise and that we have merely learnt to neutralise them to get a little visual peace. They certainly look a bit odd on the screen when applied to ordinary life. Whether this difficulty will be overcome by the lens or the stock or whether we shall just learn to accept them as we accept so many other conventions about the screen remains to be seen.

The films I have mentioned are only a few of a large programme of colour films from Canada and these few notes on them are only nibblings at the edge of a large and important subject. Over here, shortage of stock, the difficulties of obtaining good prints, and lack of plant to meet professional needs, holds up any large scale developments, but they are bound to come. Colour gives the film an extra strength as well as a great deal of extra pleasure to the viewer and our vast non-theatrical audiences will want to see it used. So, whatever our prejudices against working in 16 mm. and our aesthetic views on the selective use of colour may be, it is worth while considering the whole matter carefully now, before we find that times have changed and left us with a hard sprint ahead of us.

ARMY EXPERIMENTS IN FILM PRESENTATION

by J. D. Forman

HOW MEMORABLE is knowledge imparted through the medium of the screen? The educational value of the documentary film depends largely on the answer to this question. During the war the Army has carried out experiments which, if they do not give a comprehensive answer, at least throw some interesting sidelights on the subject.

Learning depends on three main factors, Motivation, Understanding and Retention. A man goes to a cocktail party where he is introduced to several people, including an attractive girl and the director of a firm in which he hopes for employment. On leaving the party he remembers the names of these two and has forgotten all the remainder. That is learning due to motivation. All evidence shows that the film can be completely successful as an agent for motivation. Films such as *The New Lot*, *The Way Ahead*, etc., reconcile the recruit to anomalies of Army life and increase his training receptivity. A class which has seen the film *Next of Kin* will show a better learning curve in a lecture on security than one which has not. Motivation films, however, only open the way to learning, they attempt not to inculcate knowledge but to produce a favourable attitude of mind. They can achieve their full effect by a normal showing in the way of an entertainment film.

The film which is concerned with Understanding and Retention of knowledge, however, demands a drastic difference in treatment. These films called for convenience *factual* films, have two main factors which limit their success. The first is retroactive inhibition. Even with an attentive audience, in a 30-minute film of concentrated fact, indigestion occurs after the first 10 minutes; the matter absorbed in the last 15 minutes drives out the facts assimilated earlier.

The second factor is the lack of class activity. Investigation shows that an average class of students attending an instructional film in a day of high mental and physical activity record the following reaction—"Thank God, now I can relax. Enjoyable or not, this film will at least give us time to sit back and rest, safe from the instructor's probe." The association of the atmosphere of the film with entertainment is hard to break. It is fair to say that on a plain factual subject no efforts of the director or camera-man will counterbalance forty minutes of unbroken warmth and darkness in the middle of an active day's instruction.

The technique in use in the Army was to show a factual film through, to discuss it and then to show it through a second time. This entailed a certain amount of class activity, but in many cases the amount of knowledge retained was still low. Many different techniques were tested, the one described below emerging as the most successful for general application.

(1) The film was previewed and carefully studied by the instructor, who broke it up into convenient sequences of not less than two to three minutes showing time and not more than ten.
(2) Before showing, the object of the whole period was explained to the class.
(3) A set of two or three questions on the first sequence was dictated to the class, and they were warned that they would be expected to supply the answers.
(4) The first sequence was shown in the normal way and at the end the instructor stimulated a discussion amongst the class on the answers to the questions, being careful not to lay down any opinion or solution of his own.
(5) The first sequence was shown a second time with the instructor answering each question as it was on the screen. A microphone linked with the speaker was used, the operator fading out the sound track when necessary.
(6) The instructor gave a short summary of the sequence either orally or visually on a blackboard.
(7) Subsequent sequences were treated in the same manner.
(8) Three days later a quiz on the whole film was set for the class.

This technique has many advantages. At the film shows, the student is mentally on tip-toe, the first time to find the answers to the questions, the second time to hear if his answer was correct. There is complete class-participation and class-activity. Instead of the impersonal commentator giving the period (for whom the student does not give a damn) it is done by his own instructor (for whose good opinion he gives a great deal). Retroactive inhibition is avoided, each phase is thoroughly digested. Each lesson is driven home by the instructor as it is actually on the screen. Finally, the considered summary of the instructor drives home with overbearing conviction after the usually inadequate student discussion.

It has disadvantages too. Only fifteen minutes of running time can be shown in a forty-five minute period. The instructor must be good, and he must devote a great deal of time to preliminary study. The subject of the film must be sufficiently important and the film itself must be of sufficient value to merit such an intensive study. Assuming, however, that it is important for the matter of the film to be thoroughly assimilated, there is no doubt that this new technique succeeds where the old one failed, as can be seen from the results of the following test.

A film of concentrated fact dealing with the organisation and duties of a military formation, which ran for twenty-five minutes, was selected as the subject. Two samples of forty students of the same age, training, experience and ability were shown the film. Class A saw it the old way—once through; discuss; once through again. The same instructor presented the film to class B, using the new technique. In this case the discussion between the showings in the old method had to be so exhaustive that the respective experiments both covered two periods of forty-five minutes. Three days later an examination paper on the film was set to both classes. Class A scored an average percentage of 28.6 marks, class B scored 78.3 marks.

The treatment of highly technical films may have to be even more intensive. In some cases (e.g., the action of the 4-stroke engine) it may be wise to run a film loop in constant repetition until the class, by concentrating on one feature at a time, has mastered the several and distinct processes at work.

Other experiments have aimed to lift the film down from its pedestal of self-sufficiency and to bring it to the aid of the instructor wherever it can usefully serve him. Thus short Film Flashes form an integral part of many lectures. They can be used to motivate, to explain or demonstrate. In an introductory lecture on Artillery the period is started by a three-minute sequence of the barrage before Alamein from the film *Desert Victory*, ending on the line—"The Infantry reached their objective, the barrage had done its work." The lights go up, the lecturer picks up his cue "The barrage had done its work.—Gentlemen, the Royal Artillery is the Infantryman's greatest friend. . . ." The class are in the right frame of mind. Again, in a lecture on Tank-Infantry Co-operation, the lecturer explains the somewhat confusing terms Hull-down and Turret-down by showing the diagrammatic and live sequence from the film *The Single Track*. The film is used, in fact, as an animated visual and aural aid.

Enough has been said to demonstrate the Army's approach to the subject. Unfortunately the experiments were carried out only at the presentation end. Similar experiments in civilian educational films embracing both production and presentation have great possibilities. Fortunately there is no place in educational films for the whims of the professional critic. The film sets out to do a job. Its success can be gauged by the statistician and the psychologist in hard figures.

URGENTLY NEEDED: "D.N.L." copies of No. 5, Vol. 4, and Nos. 3, 4 and 5, Vol. 5. We shall be glad if subscribers who have the above copies will sell them back to us (at 2/- per copy) as we need them to complete sets for binding.

SIGHT and SOUND

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AUDIENCE RESEARCH

by a member of the Shell Film Unit

RECENTLY, at the Shell Film Unit, we launched into a new educational series of films on the theory of flight. The series is planned for a limited distribution, being designed for the use of people in some way connected with aviation, as flying pupils, workers, or R.A.F. personnel, and also for the senior forms of secondary schools. As the first film neared completion, we considered the idea of showing it, in its cutting copy form, to the types of audience for whom it was intended.

Two reasons prompted the decision to try out the film in this way: firstly, we wished to establish that the approach of the film itself was sensible and adequate; secondly, we were anxious to discover how worth while it might be to pursue audience reaction tests as a regular stage in film making. After the final show to the experts who had advised in the making of the film, therefore, we arranged a special show of the cutting copy (commentary and picture) to each of three groups of people who together represented, as far as we could determine, future audiences. These groups were: a batch of R.A.F. aircrew personnel in the early stages of training (aged 19–31 years), a group of A.T.C. cadets (aged 14–19 years), and an audience of schoolboys (aged 13–17½ years). The numbers were, respectively, 15, 30 and 23. It may be argued that this did not give a broad enough survey on which to base any very sound conclusion. On the other hand, to arrange a detailed investigation involving audiences totalling several hundred people is, perhaps, beyond the scope of a small production unit. As it was, the limited enquiry, outlined above, took two to three weeks to organise, to record, and to analyse the results.

The first step was to prepare a questionnaire, the answers to which, we hoped, would indicate, not only the efficiency of the film in imparting its information, but also the reaction of the audiences to the film's style and approach. For convenience, the questionnaire was broadly divided into three sections, covering: (1) matters of opinion as to length of scene, commentator's voice, etc.; (2) matters of fact, the information contained in the film; and (3) details from the audience, such as other films they might have seen, which would have a bearing on their response to this film. Each show was prefaced by a spoken explanation briefly outlining its purpose; an attempt was also made to give the feeling that, by answering the questions carefully and honestly, the audience was, in fact, taking part in the making of the film. An even briefer written introduction to the questionnaire, which each member of the audience read before turning to the questions, emphasised what had been said. A special point was made of warning each audience that, although they were going to see an almost finished film, it was still at a rough state, when the odd noises, marks and scratches, common to all cutting copies, would be apparent. There is no doubt that such an introduction was essential in order to make the audience feel there was a serious purpose behind the show. It evoked an excellent response from most people, but perhaps did not go far enough to break down all the reserves of some of the service personnel.

The questionnaire was designed along familiar lines, a variety of answers being given to each question, from which the subject had to select one by underlining. Here is one example from each of the three sections of questions.

(1) Did the commentator speak:
too quickly, too slowly, about the right speed?

(2) Is the sideways pressure of the airflow in the narrower part of the venturi tube:
greater than, less than, the same as throughout the rest of the tube?

(3) Did you know the subject before you saw the film:
yes, no, partly?

In all, there were some forty questions asked, which, it was estimated, would take ten to fifteen minutes to answer. It was found that most people did complete the forms within this time, although, of course, it varied from individual to individual—and more surprisingly, perhaps, from group to group (the youngest group being collectively the quickest).

For convenience, the answers of each audience batch were recorded on a single sheet of graph paper according to a method developed by the Audience Reaction Committee of the London Scientific Film Society. A column, one small square wide, was devoted to each of the alternative answers to the questions; the answers given in the individual papers being recorded by a tick in the appropriate column along one line. In this way, reading across gave an individual's answers to all the questions, while reading down the three or four appropriate columns gave all the answers to any one question. At a glance, therefore, one could see where the majority answer lay. Apart from this eye-catching advantage, it was a useful way of condensing the matter in order to prepare a summary; for this represented a full record, allowing the bulky questionnaire forms to be destroyed or stored.

Before discussing the results, it is as well to remember that the film was shown in its cutting copy form. There is no doubt that the "build-ups", joins, "dust-crackle," and all the other evidence of hard work in the cutting room, disturbed the audience. Possibly this was unavoidable, since to wait until there is a married print before trying out a film does not suggest that one is going to be easily influenced to make changes by what the audience thinks of it. However, one can allow for this factor by discounting to some extent the answers which implied, for instance, that the scenes in the film were "jerky".

There are so many variables likely to affect an experiment of such a limited nature that one must be careful not to draw too sweeping deductions from the results. Probably, the only really reliable indications came from the section of questions testing the success of the film in presenting its facts. Here we found that, irrespective of audience group, there was a high proportion of correct answers: out of 18 questions of fact, 15 were answered correctly by all except for 2 or 3 out of each group. Although several members of the audience had already covered some of the ground in the film during their normal school lessons or training, most of the subject was sufficiently new for the foregoing to be taken as an indication that the film was fairly successful in presenting its information clearly on a first showing. An interesting fact emerging from the answers to this section of questions is that, as a whole, the audiences were less successful in dealing with questions of a general kind whose answers could be deduced from the film. Out of three questions designed to this end, the audiences answered only two with any degree of common accuracy, while the third question was not even attempted by more than a quarter of them. Since, however, they were specially asked not to tarry over the questions (so that we could be sure of gaining their first impressions), too little time for thought may have been the real reason for much of this apparent lack of success.

When assessing the answers to questions of opinion, one appears to be on even less sure ground, for opinion is more likely to be influenced by irrelevant matters; yet the majority of answers in most cases, were sufficiently alike from all three audience groups to suggest their validity. For instance, more than 90 per cent of each audience thought the commentary was spoken at the right speed; and some 70–75 per cent thought the commentator to be an expert, speaking with a pleasant voice a clear commentary that could not have been simpler and gave just about enough information (five questions). In some questions, however, although in each case the majority were of the same opinion, the proportion varied from group to group. As an example, we find 90 per cent of the schoolboys and of the R.A.F. personnel agreeing that the pauses between sentences of the commentary were, as a whole, too long, whereas rather less than 60 per cent of the A.T.C. cadet group thought this to be so. The later questions in this section covered points about visual presentation, evoking, in general, a more varied response. For instance, while some 60 per cent of the schoolboys considered each separate picture (or scene) to be too long, only about 50 per cent of the A.T.C. cadets were in agreement with this view; but this attitude was opposed by the group of R.A.F. personnel, 66 per cent of whom felt each scene to be about the right length. Without comparing the results of individual intelligence tests with these questionnaires, it is difficult to account for such opposite views, unless they can be taken as showing the greater professional interest of the R.A.F. in the subject.

The method of recording the answers, so that their trend can be appreciated at a glance, is revealing. One notices that in one group 3 out of 14 people feel that the commentator is "not an expert at all". Looking along the answers to the next two questions, one finds that two of these same three people think the commentary to be "sometimes clear and sometimes complicated" and the same two think further that the commentary "could have been simpler". Since these two people could have been sitting next to each other, there may be no other significance in their answers than that they were chatting to each other (this was observed with more than one group), missed the thread of the commentary and vented their disgust on the film. This kind of influence may be reflected, too, in the response to the question inviting individual comments or remarks, where it was noticeable that almost all the elder schoolboys filled up the space provided with suggestions and conclusions, encouraged less, perhaps, by spontaneity than by the accident of their having sat close enough together to be able to follow each other's example. Remarks, in general, were appreciative or constructive:

(*continued on page* 14)

FILMS OF 1945

Owing to shortage of space we have fallen behind with film reviews. Below we endeavour to correct the fault by giving brief notices of as many as possible of the films which we have missed. The fact that the notices are necessarily short does not mean that the films are any less important than ones previously reviewed at greater length; in this rapid tour we have only time to note the salient features. The following notes are edited from material supplied by several reviewers.

Firstly we would like to note the establishment of two new directors who are fulfilling their early promise. Ken Annakin and Budge Cooper, whose films are reviewed below, have shown in the past that they were directors whose work would be interesting to follow. Annakin's quick, rich, pictorial sense made his films a pleasure to watch, and Budge Cooper's warm and sympathetic handling of people gave her films a very moving quality. To these directorial capabilities, they are both adding a growing maturity and understanding.

Fenlands and **West Riding** (Green Park) are directed by Ken Annakin and most beautifully photographed by Peter Hennessy. To his feeling for the patterns of the countryside Annakin is adding an awareness of people and their ways of living. **Fenlands** is a lovely and informative film about that part of England where man fights a perpetual battle with waters. Notable sequences are those in which a man goes duck shooting with a strange miniature cannon, and the rebuilding of the flood-holding banks. The synchronous part of the film is not so deftly handled and there seemed no very good reason for ending the film on a note of visual lamentation, but these are minor points and do not spoil an excellent job. It is worth noting, in connection with the commentary, that the East Anglian dialect seems to be more easily understood the most. In **West Riding,** Annakin has caught the solidity of Yorkshire with great skill and this survey of its people and their work and play is, apart from a certain tendency to meander, a warm and satisfactory picture.

Also from Green Park comes **The Proud City,** made for M.O.I.; **Make Fruitful the Land,** and **Farmer's Boy,** both made for the British Council. The first of these, partly by commentary, partly by direct speech from Lord Latham, Sir Patrick Abercrombie and others, gives an impression of the huge scheme prepared by the L.C.C. for the re-planning of London. Unlike many films it is most interesting when it utilises models and animation to show what is proposed. More of this and a little less of conventional shooting would have led to a more practical and useful contribution to a theme which should interest all Londoners. **Proud City,** directed by Ralph Keene and produced by Edgar Anstey, is an excellent introduction to the subject of building a new London. **Make Fruitful the Land** is a Technicolor excursion into agriculture and the rotation of crops. Although it is always pleasant to look at, the film rather falls between two stools, being neither technical enough for teaching purposes nor simple and interesting enough for entertainment. The diagrams were very fresh and pleasantly drawn by W. M. Larkins but were not particularly well worked out as far as the animation was concerned. Briskly and efficiently **Farmer's Boy,** directed by Peter Price, tells us what goes on at an Agricultural Training College. It is very neat and crisp and does a useful job in emphasising the scientific approach to farming.

From Halas-Batchelor comes a Technicolor film called **Handling Ships,** made for the Admiralty. At first thought, animated drawings would seem the only means of showing precisely the right and wrong ways of bringing a ship into harbour. But if the pictures are really to teach they must be slower and smoother than is humanly possible by this method. Hence the technique is used here of combining models with drawings, so that the ships move smoothly and the wind and tide are represented by symbols. Except for a few fancy feet at the start, every part of the film is insistently lucid. Ingenuity is rigidly controlled; not a shot nor a colour effect is superfluous or over elaborate. **Handling Ships** is a first-rate example of a training film technique, which could be used with equal success for other subjects.

A short teaching film, **How a Motor Car Engine Works,** made by Verity for the Ford Motor Co., is also successful. It explains entirely by cartoon the function of the cylinders and pistons in making a motor car go. The animation, by T. R. Thumwood, is excellent, and the film is extremely clear and easy to understand. It also has the virtue of making you want to know how the other parts of the engine work. Altogether a first-class job, directed by Max Munden. For Horizon Films, Max Munden directed **Song of the People.** The script for this film was written by Munden and Paul Potts and the music is by Spolianski who has contributed one of his usual lively scores. It is a very odd film indeed and many people will find it rather irritating because of its lack of style or sparkle. The message of the film, which was made for the Co-operative Movement, is that workers must unite and the film tells, roughly, the story of the growth of the working class movement by means of re-enacted sequences from history (the most hazardous of all film endeavours), and a sound track worked out in terms of chorus and music. By the mere fact of its bravely breaking away from the more accepted manner of presenting such a subject it succeeds in being entertaining and impressive. The total result is slightly marred by the fact that some of the sung words are inaudible but this is a minor point and does not prevent enjoyment of half-an-hour of something new and fresh. From Verity comes **Chemists at Work,** a competently made but purposeless film. It belongs to that tiresome category of films. The Tour Round the Works. It is impossible to believe that there was not an excellent story to be told in the place where M & B 693 and Mepacrine are made, to mention only two of the products of which we are given the usual irritating glimpses.

In much the same manner, only this time in Technicolor, we are given a look at the optical glass industry in **Let's See.** Our reviewer could recall very little about this British Council film except that it was very nicely photographed and the colour was good. Another film, **Steam,** directed by Jimmy Rogers, with music by Clifton Parker, was commissioned by Messrs. Babcock and Wilcox for overseas showing to technical audiences. A brief history of the process of steam raising introduces the planning of a modern plant together with the use of its components. These are shown being manufactured and finally, assembled into a giant "high head" unit. The film is a modern saga of steam raising and richly deserves the superlatives that Hollywood is wont to bestow on its own successes. It is a pity that the excellence of the photography and setting should be marred by the monotony and stridency of the music.

Steel made for the British Council, and superbly well photographed in Technicolor by Jack Cardiff, turns out to be just a smashing advertisement for that particular colour process. Steel manufacture is a natural subject for colour fireworks and here we get a display that stays on the retina of the mind all the way home on the bus, and, indeed, much longer than that. Unfortunately the commentary hardly gets to the mind at all, so the meaning of steel to the community, and of British steel to the world, is not much illuminated.

Papworth Village Settlement (World Wide), directed by James Carr, is one of the most interesting films we have seen for a long time. It tells the story of the tuberculosis settlement with special emphasis on the rehabilitation of the patients. It is so skilfully made that it looks extremely simple but it is a simplicity that covers a thorough knowledge of the subject and results in a clear and moving exposition of the problem, its treatment and the results. It is an excellent story most warmly and happily directed.

From Realist comes **The Plan and the People,** directed by Frank Sainsbury. This presents the human angle on the L.C.C. plan for London. Heart warming is an abused epithet but that is what this film is. Plans on paper are all very well but eventually people have got to live in the plan. Here is the ordinary fellow's viewpoint in a series of human and understanding sequences. The enemies of the plan are presented in rather a grotesque light but the picture of their machinations is fair enough. Certainly the ordinary people shown in this film deserve the best of all possible plans.

All the skilful film-making in the world cannot completely save a poorly-conceived idea. **A Soldier Comes Home,** a fifteen minuter for the Ministry of Information, made by Gryphon Films, is apparently intended to warn waiting wives and husbands returning from the wars that they may have to face a period of psychological readjustment. Everyone has done their best to put this theme across but the basic idea was obviously never very clearly worked out and what might have been a useful film turns out to be an emotionally muddled rough sketch for a film yet to be made.

At the beginning of this series of reviews we mentioned the name of Miss Budge Cooper. Her film is called **Birthday** (D.A.T.A.), produced by Donald Alexander and photographed by Suschitsky. Its subject is how a baby is born and this is slightly mixed up with the problem of infant mortality in Scotland. Budge Cooper is rapidly proving that she is one of the best directors of ordinary people that documentary has produced. But despite her sympathetic handling of people the film is not successful. It starts off by explaining what a bad state of infant mortality there is in Scotland and how many mothers and children die each year. It then, without a break, explains how simple a process birth is,

you understand the mechanics of it. There is an unnecessary framework of a soldier who is worried about his wife having her first child, and how he is consoled and brought to a realistic understanding of the process by his very unusual M.O. The film has obviously been mucked about with for reasons of policy and, as always in cases like this, suffers. But anyway, the film is perfectly directed and photographed. The diagrams are excellent. To blame are the people who did not have the courage to tell the disgraceful story of infant mortality in Scotland.

Personnel Selection, Recruits, from the Shell Film Unit, deals with personnel selection in the British Army, and is another brilliant example of documentary's growing power of handling people as well as ideas. The film gives an extremely comprehensive idea of exactly how the Army dealt with the problem of fitting square pegs into the squarest possible holes. Faced with an enormous intake of men with all sorts of aptitudes and varying levels of intelligence the Army devised tests of many kinds to sort the men out. The results of these tests give the Personnel Selection Officers a basis on which to work. The process is a thorough one and we are shown it in great and interesting detail; when demands come from different branches of the Army the Selection Department is ready with the right men for the right job. The film is so well made that one's interest is held right through although the film is a long one. This is not only due to the great care that has been taken to make every thing clear and comprehensible but is mainly because of Geoffrey Bell's very sensitive and human handling of the people in the film. The introduction of the tests for A.T.S. rather impeded the easy flow of the story and the very frightening sorting machine was never quite put across.

Homes for the People (Basic Films for the *Daily Herald*) is directed by Kay Mander and photographed by the late Pat Gay. This is a vigorous film covering an aspect of the subject already familiar to many, but by no means an easy one to tackle. Five housewives present the case for better housing in a series of interviews with the camera, their common experience of housing inadequacies suffered by so many people in Britain being the peg on which to hang a general survey of the situation. Rightly, none of these housewives is a glamour girl in any sense of the word; but, while the points each has to make are quite well put over, there is a monotony, almost a whine about their approach to the problems. A touch of robust humour in at least one of the interviews, apart from being representative of a very real trait in national character, would have emphasised—by bringing into greater relief—the circumscription of living under bad housing conditions. This film is a valuable aid to the ever-growing demand for national housing and should do much to encourage action in that direction.

The Crown Film Unit present **Father and Son,** an editing job based on material shot by Leon Schauder in the village of Tukumbu near Mombasa, in East Africa. The film deals with the battle between modern medicine and old magic, compass and chart as opposed to hoping for the best. Protaganist of the modern world is a young African sailor who returns from the Navy to visit his father who is a village elder. By simply stating the facts and leaving the audience to draw its own conclusions the film does an excellent job of posing a problem and its effect is only marred by the efforts of the commentator to dramatise the already sufficiently interesting subject.

For Strand Carl Heck directed **Chinese in Britain.** The film, by drawing parallels between Chinese and British activities, gives a pleasant picture of their lives in this country and their achievements here.

To the March of Time, the thorny problem of Palestine and Jewish immigration presents no terrors: they rush in with a presentation that completely ignores any considered views that the Arabs might hold. But for its failure to present a balanced argument, this issue, **Palestine Problem,** would rank as one of the best for some time. It is very well edited, with a high photographic quality, and gives an intelligent presentation of Jewish Palestinian achievements in trade, agriculture and social organisation.

Their other film, **Battle for Beauty,** may well prove to be one of the comedy hits of the year. Dedicated to the idea that American women regard the achievement of beauty as an end in itself this issue contains enough humour, conscious and unconscious, to send an average audience into convulsions. Coming so shortly after **Teen-Age Girls,** one feels that the March of Time is not doing quite its best for good Anglo-American relations.

FEATURE DOCUMENTARIES

THERE have been many long documentaries in 1945. **Burma Victory,** without overlooking the strategic aspects of the subject, gives an inspiring and moving picture of the men who sweated and fought in that grim campaign. This is a magnificent film. **The True Glory,** made by Carol Reed and Garson Kanin, was, quite apart from its other excellent qualities, distinguished by an inspiring and imaginative sound track. The pictures were finely chosen and assembled but were given a great and extra emotional impact by the beautifully written and spoken comments by the men of the Allied Forces plus a very great music score by William Alwyn. This film will last as an impressive record of the last months of the war. In **Journey Together** John Boulting brings great directorial skill to the story of the training of a bomber crew and their subsequent part in a raid on Berlin. Only a certain amount of indecision in the scripting prevent **Journey Together** from being a memorable film but cannot stop it from being a solid achievement and a fine record. **Today and Tomorrow** from World Wide has had an excellent reception on its first showing and we reserve comment for our next issue when we shall be able to give it more space. We also hope that Paul Rotha's new film, **Land of Promise,** will be available for review at the same time. One of the most exciting films of the year is **Diary for Timothy,** from the Crown Film Unit.

Directed by Humphrey Jennings, produced by Basil Wright, photographed by Fred Gamage, commentary by E. M. Forster and music by Richard Addinsell, this, like the **True Glory,** is the story of the last months of the war, but is set on this side of the Channel. It is told to baby Timothy, born on the fifth anniversary of the outbreak of war, in the form of a diary. The diary has four main characters: a wounded fighter pilot, a farmer, a coal miner, and a railway engine driver. The film tells of the battles and bad working conditions of the miners, the buzz bombs and the prospects for a better world in the future. But when Timothy grows up and sees his diary, he will not get a clear, wide or practical impression of what men did and felt in the last months of the second European war. What Timothy will see, though, is a film made by a director with rare imagination and skill. Humphrey Jennings, even if his thoughts are not quite clear in this particular film, uses sounds and pictures so ably that it does not matter much what the film is about. An unemotional boy's voice singing "Adeste Fidelis" played against a pan from steely cold water and frozen rushes up to a frozen landscape and up again to finish on a close-up of a frozen branch; a seventy-foot long close-up of a baby blowing bubbles, with the sound of a choir singing.

The film is so packed with ideas and experiments, skill and enthusiasm, that all you can do is to raise your hat to Jennings, and wish that he had had a clearer theme to work on. You will also want to raise your hat to Fred Gamage whose photography is above even the Crown Film Unit's standard. **Diary for Timothy** is good for general audiences, and excellent for anyone interested in films.

Perhaps because Norway stands out in the minds of most people as having shown integrity—that rare quality on the political field of World War II, **Return of the Vikings** (directed by Charles Frend, produced by Michael Balcon) easily captures a sympathetic interest in its subject—the part played by Norway during the war.

Reconstructed sequences of life and training in the Norwegian Army, in hospitals and rest hostels, contrast with scenes of the Norwegian countryside, of service-shot material of the Allied bombing of Gestapo headquarters in Oslo, of the whaling ships—perhaps the most outstanding sequence. It opens the film and introduces Gunnar the harpoonist. (His adventures after the invasion of Norway, when he joins the Norwegian Army and goes on a secret mission, tell the story of the film.) One might even say that a virtue is made of having to use different levels of photographic quality, and there is a variety in the treatment of sequences. But there is also a tendency for this variety to break down into shapelessness and the film is too long, largely it seems from a determination to refer to every aspect of the subject pictorially. This is a pity, because the handling of one or two brief sequences was sensitive and compelling. One which sticks in the mind shows Gunnar about to meet his wife and child who have escaped from Norway. They await him at a Norwegian centre in London. The simple shot of a door of a room, hiding his loved ones, becomes invested with his feeling of restrained impatience. And when they do meet? They embrace quietly. It's their small son who, unconcernedly, becomes the centre of feeling for them both—never in his few young years having met the father who now holds him, he is more interested in the paratroop insignia on this strange man's uniform.

As sensitive a handling of human relationships comes in **Painted Boats** (also from Ealing, directed by Charles Crichton, photographed by Douglas Slocombe). Barge-bred girl and boy are beset with problems of national service on unfamiliar land. The film, very well photographed and cut, has made us feel, with the girl, for the magic of living between slowly, steadily drifting banks of countryside, never tedious because always changing, and punctuated with the ritual of the locks.

Painted Boats and **Return of the Vikings** are very creditable examples of the now accepted incursion of the documentary idea into the second-feature world (they held the attention of West End audiences). Upon them the British feature directors of tomorrow are cutting their

(*continued on page* 10)

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teeth and the second set should be good. But if brevity is the soul of wit, surely of film, the soul is brevity and shape.

FEATURES

THE STUDIOS are maintaining the high level that they set for themselves during the war. Ealing presents **Dead of Night,** a film whose credit list is as long as the film is excellent. This film, always entertaining and in certain sequences, notably that of the ventriloquist, memorable, is a very successful excursion into the field of the macabre. The script in particular, largely the work of John Baines, reaches a level seldom achieved in feature films. Ann Todd, Compton Bennet, Reg Wyer and Sidney Box have a deservedly great success with the **Seventh Veil.** This new organisation at Riverside holds great promise for the future. In their own puzzle corner manner Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger present **I Know Where I'm Going.** Here is great film-making skill, but it is rather wasted on a very slight anecdote which revolves round the question of whether you should marry for love or for money. Although the story is developed entirely in visual terms, a very rare and refreshing occurrence, the essential triviality of the theme plus the lack of plot make the film rather an ineffectual one. With great ballyhoo and sound of tuckets without, **Caesar and Cleopatra** has been launched into an alien world. Although our reviewer does not think that the story was worth filming or that the amount of money spent was necessary, and believes the whole thing was a lot of fuss about nothing in particular, he admits to having enjoyed the film very much indeed. The acting of Vivien Leigh was a delight to watch and she was more than ably supported by Claude Rains, Stewart Grainger, Basil Sidney and Cecil Parker. The film is very easy on the eye and the dialogue is a pleasure to listen to. An excellently adult evening's entertainment. From Independent Producers comes **The Rake's Progress,** directed by Sidney Gilliat. Direction, dialogue and production value are on a high level but the story somehow or other misses the mark. The Rake of the story is a cad and his Progress lacks both tragedy and pity, but as it is told with great skill and embellished by the performances of Rex Harrison, Lili Palmer and Margaret Will-she-or-won't-she-be-a-star Johnstone, it makes a pleasant enough entertainment.

Brief Encounter was a sorry affair. Impeccably directed and photographed (David Lean and Bob Krasker), this slight story of two middle-aged people in search of a bed became vaguely comic instead of being noble or pathetic. The comedy sequences were particularly inept and the film, apart from its polish, was chiefly remarkable for a splendid cinematic performance by the superb Celia Johnson.

Finally we have the odd developments at British National, where Lou Jackson is busy producing some very peculiar films. **Latin Quarter** and **Murder in Reverse** have one great advantage in common and that is they both are made with gusto. Each has a story to tell and is determined that you shall both watch and listen to it. In spite of some of the worst acting and dialogue seen for a long time they hold the attention in an ancient mariner fashion and you cannot tear yourself away. With an improvement in technique and no loss of enthusiasm Elstree may once again become a power in the film industry. a turbulently independent state on the edge of Rank's mighty empire.

FILMS REVIEWED

A Soldier Comes Home. M.O.I., Gryphon. 15 mins.
Battle for Beauty. M.O.T., 18 mins.
Birthday. M.O.I., Data. 20 mins.
Burma Victory. A.F.U. 65 mins.
Chemists at Work. May and Baker, Verity. 18 mins.
Chinese in Britain. M.O.I., Strand. 11 mins.
Diary for Timothy. M.O.I., Crown. 45 mins.
Farmer's Boy. Brit. Council, Green Park. 15 mins.
Father and Son. M.O.I., Crown. 15 mins.
Fenlands. M.O.I., Green Park. 19 mins.
Handling Ships. Admiralty, Halas Batchelor. 60 mins.
Homes for the People. Odhams, Basic. 23 mins.
How a Motor Car Engine Works. Ford, Verity. 20 mins.
Journey Together. M.O.I., R.A.F. F.U. 95 mins.
Land of Promise. Films of Fact. 60 mins.
Let's See. Brit. Council, Merton Park. 18 mins.
Make Fruitful the Land. Brit. Council, Green Park. 17 mins.
Palestine Problem. M.O.T. 18 mins.
Papworth Village Settlement. Brit. Council, World Wide. 20 mins.
Personnel Selection. M.O.I., Shell F.U. 63 mins.
Proud City. M.O.I., Green Park. 25 mins.
Song of the People. C.W.S., Horizon. 30 mins.
Steam. Babcock & Wilcox, Pub. Films. 55 mins.
Steel. Brit. Council, Merton Park. 35 mins.
The Plan and the People. M.O.I., Realist. 19 mins.
The True Glory. M.O.I. and O.W.I. 85 mins.
Today and Tomorrow. M.O.I., World Wide. 40 mins.
West Riding. Brit. Council, Green Park. 22 mins.

Films For Children (*continued from page* 3)

Board of Film Censors are automatically suitable for children. The Board does not appear to have either expert knowledge of, or expert advice on, child psychology.

The constructive potentialities of the children's cinemas are immense. Given good film material, available in sufficient quantity, and intelligent and responsible managements, the clubs could eventually become a valuable auxiliary instrument in education. The need and urge for entertainment can, indeed must, go together with education. Obtrusive moralising is abhorred by children, whether in the form of films, slides, or "club promises". Many local managers would, I believe, share in the request for a speedy and far-reaching reform of the present state of affairs.

Dartington Hall (*continued from page* 5)

capacity of a firm, a research institute, or an education authority, all of whose demands will fall wholly within the 16 mm. category. The cost of maintaining such a unit, with a complete professional team, would be in the order of £5,000 a year. This cost can be met without difficulty by a combination of officially sponsored production and distribution, and of private commissions, and the professional team would ensure the necessary technical quality. The encouragement of a dozen such units might well be part of our—so far non-existent—national policy about the future of documentary and educational film.

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A FILM HISTORIAN

By Jean Benoit-Lévy

AT LONG last, the government of the United States has recognised the cinema as an art as well as an industry, and has created a department of film preservation in the Library of Congress. Miss Iris Barry, who is to head the staff which will recommend films for permanent deposit in the library, represents a fitting choice. Probably no other person in this country has done more than she to awaken the public to the importance of the cinema, and to attain for it the respect habitually given to literature and the fine arts.

Miss Barry began her film career as a founder-member of The Film Society in London, and as motion picture editor of the *Daily Mail*. In 1932, the New York Museum of Modern Art chose her to be curator of its newly formed Film Library. In that capacity she has built up one of the richest collections of films in the world—the only truly comprehensive one, including as it does pictures dating from the earliest products of Edison and Lumière to current features, documentaries, and shorts, of all types. Thanks to her intelligent action, at a time when governments were only mildly concerned or were even frankly indifferent, hundreds of early films have been saved for future generations. These films are the result of Miss Barry's earnest delving into the film vaults of most of the capitals of Europe, as well as research in the United States.

Under Miss Barry's direction, the Film Library of the Museum of Modern Art serves the public in a variety of ways. There are daily screenings of films at the Museum, presented in such interesting series as: *The Basis of Modern Technique; Great Actresses of the Past; Ace Directors; The Social Film; The Comedy Tradition; The Documentary Film*, etc. To accompany these films, Miss Barry has prepared explanatory and critical notes. These are available at the Museum, but are perhaps even more valuable in the many schools throughout the United States who regularly borrow from the Library films of particular educational interest.

Miss Barry heads another department of the Museum of Modern Art, in which United States Films are re-edited for distribution in South America. This work was undertaken at the request of the Co-ordinator of Inter-American affairs.

In spite of the busy programme outlined thus far, Miss Barry finds time for writing about her beloved movies. Her books include: *Let's go to the Movies* (1925); *D. W. Griffith, American Film Master* (1940); and a translation of *History of the Motion Picture* by Bardeche and Brasillach (1936). She is a regular contributor to the book review columns of the *New York Herald Tribune*, and articles of hers have also appeared in *La Nacion, Ars, Tricolor*, the *Hollywood Quarterly* and the publications of the Writers' War Board.

To this brief sketch of her public career, I should have liked to add a real description of her personality, but I know she does not like to be put in the limelight. I can, however, say that under an appearance of airiness and behind paradoxical sayings, she hides a wealth of kindness and intelligence that works for the benefit of the many who come to her for help each year. Her modesty masks rich knowledge of the motion picture and enthusiastic understanding of this art. For Iris Barry is in fact both the cinema's historian and its critic. More than anyone else, she will have served to establish a system for the classification of films and for their evaluation, thus making possible the recognition of certain films or classics in their different schools. By preserving for now and the future the classic films, she furnishes us and our successors with the means of studying the past and through it to continue the evolution of an art no longer a child, but whose growth (in my opinion) was retarded by its having to learn to talk.

Naturally enough, Iris Barry as a successful and thoroughly likeable film historian, is an influential member of the International Federation of Film Libraries, an association composed of Museums that have taken on the responsibility of preserving examples of the great ages in the art whose short history is already so rich and so promising.

BOOK REVIEWS

Invitation to the Film. Liam O'Laoghaire. With a foreword by Frank Launder. (*The Kerryman, Tralee*. 1945. 7*s*. 6*d*.)

Invitation to the Film has four themes—the history of the cinema, the technique of the cinema, the use of the cinema by amateurs and for teaching, and the place of the film in the national life of Eire. Most people will find one of these themes interesting, and some people will be interested in them all. The history of the film is well done within the limits of some 30 pages. Though most of it is a summary of material already fairly well known, the story of the early history of the film in Ireland has not been told before. There is a good selection of stills from films of many countries.

The study of the technique of the film occupies about 60 pages. It perhaps takes too much for granted on the part of the reader. To be of real value to the novice, the descriptions of the processes of film making should have been more detailed. The study of the amateur film and the film in teaching is excellent, particularly the analysis of the costs and methods of making a sub-standard film. Mr. O'Laoghaire here speaks from a long and successful experience, and every amateur film maker will be interested to read what he says. His chapters on "The Film in the Classroom", "Film Appreciation" and "The Child and the Film" do not break new ground but sum up briefly the opinions of most progressive teachers and social workers.

Of particular interest to those studying the national use of the film are the later chapters in the book, in which Mr. O'Laoghaire makes a case for the development of a film industry in Eire. He points out that, though many countries have flourishing film industries, few countries devote much attention to training film workers. Eire is exceptional because, though she has a flourishing film school, she has no film industry. It is encouraging, too, to learn that Eire has not only an intelligent National Film Institute, but a flourishing film society with branches all over the country.

(*continued on next page*)

(*continued from previous page*)

Mr. O'Laoghaire proposes that the Government of Eire should set up and finance a national film studio. He believes that such an organisation could turn out between five and ten feature films a year, supported by between twenty and thirty short films. He points out that many continental countries succeeded in making good features for as small an amount as £15,000 (he will like to know that Denmark has a flourishing feature film industry with budgets which scarcely ever exceed £10,000). He thinks that Eire could make good features at £20,000. Provided that such films have novelty and appeal (and we may add, provided they rank for British feature quota) he believes they could bring back their production costs. Eire would, of course, have to rely on her export market to the United Kingdom and elsewhere, since the biggest gross of the most successful film in Eire cannot exceed £5,000, of which presumably, not more than £4,000 reaches the producer. He is on less safe ground when he attempts an estimate of the capital costs involved in setting up a studio and the running costs required for feature production. He would have been wiser to have gone to a better authority than the British Film Institute in the matters of film finance. He wishes to see the studio run by an Irish National Film Board, representative of the arts, the cinema, the film trade and education. He points out that a number of Irishmen have done well in films and he thinks they could be attracted back to Dublin. He hopes to make versions of his films in Gaelic.

Mr. O'Laoghaire even has a five-year plan. In the first year he would send trainees to study in English film studios. In the second year he would disperse these trainees to France, Sweden and Hollywood (why Sweden, whose films most people think dull and imitative?). By the third year, the studio and film laboratories would have been built and his trainees would be called back to plan production. In the fourth year he would produce two features (one to be handled by a foreign guest director) and ten short films. In the fifth year he would make five feature films (two to be directed by foreign guest directors) and 20 short films. Mr. O'Laoghaire's schemes seem practical. We hope the Government of Eire will act.

World of Plenty. Eric Knight and Paul Rotha, with diagrams designed by the Isotype Institute. (*Nicholson and Watson.* 1945. 1*s.* 6*d.*)

With this new publication Paul Rotha proves himself to be not only a splendid film maker but also an admirable maker of books. Like his films, his book has style, and it illustrates many of the special qualities of his craftsmanship—his skill in selecting an image to express a thought, and his skill in putting one image against another so that each is strengthened by the juxtaposition. *World of Plenty* is an outstanding film, telling its story with an ease and power which film makers all over the world admire. Its arguments might have been ephemeral moral propaganda: instead, they present proofs of the possibilities of future international relations which people everywhere sense instinctively can and must be achieved if the world is not to be snuffed out. The book from the film crystallises the arguments, and, since it is self-contained, it will be valued not only by those who admired or want to use the film, but by economists and politicians as well, whether they have seen the film or not.

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Other films in production will be announced when completed. Applications for the loan of these films should be made to the Central Film Library, Imperial Institute, London, S.W.7

FILM SOCIETIES

Dundee Film Society showed *Cambridge* and *Le Dernier Tournant* in its second programme on Sunday, October 28th. The third programme on Sunday, November 11th, consisted of *Malta Convoy*, followed by the British Council film of the sleep-walking scenes from "Macbeth". The programme ended with *Lone White Sail*. The fourth programme, on November 25th, consisted of *The Battle of Russia*, the fifth and last in a series of films made by the U.S. War Department and *L'Homme qui Cherche La Verite*. The last programme in 1945 was on Sunday, December. 9th. The films were *World of Plenty* and a Russian fairy tale called *Adventures in Bokhara*.

The Northern Counties' Children's Cinema Council opened its second series of "Films for the Classroom" with a science programme of silent and "mute" films. The eighth programme in the series "Films for Educationists" was given on Saturday, November 17th. The films were *A Mamprusi Village*, *Your Children's Teeth*, *Patterns of American Art*, *In Rural Maharathra*, *The Story of D.D.T.*, all from the Central Film Library. The ninth programme was on Saturday, December, 15th, and consisted of *A Better Tomorrow*, a U.S. documentary film on education from nursery to senior school, *Gaspe Codfishermen*, on life in a Quebec fishing village, *Your Children's Ears*, *Colour in Clay*, a British Council film, and *High Over the Border*. "Films for Young People" is the title of yet another series of film shows arranged by the Northern Counties' Children's Cinema Council, and a programme of silent and "mute" films under this heading was presented at the Little Theatre, Saltwell View, Gateshead, on Saturday, November 24th.

The Manchester and Salford Film Society has given a series of film shows at the Rivoli Cinema, Denmark Road, Rusholme, Manchester. The first performance on September 30th included *The Ten Year Plan*, a G.B.I. film on prefabricated houses, *Out of Chaos*, Jill Craigie's film intended to promote an interest in art and *Adventures in Bokhara*. On Sunday, October 28th, the films were *Children's Charter*, on the New Education Act, *Happy Childhood*, on children's welfare, *Labour Front* and *Winterset*. The Manchester and Salford Film Forum announces that there are still vacancies for membership at six shillings per annum. Application should be made to the Secretary, Miss D. Buxton, 183 Dane Road, Sale.

The first performance of **The London Scientific Film Society** was given at the Scala Theatre, Charlotte Street, London, W.1, on Sunday, December 9th; the programme consisted of *Put Yourself in His Shoes*, *Your Children's Eyes*, *Handling Ships*, *The Story of D.D.T.*, and *Tennessee Valley Authority*. The second show was held on January 20th at the Scala at 2.45 p.m., and included a memorial programme of the work of the late Percy Smith.

The Kingston and District Film Society (Secretary, H. Wells, 155 Hamilton Avenue, Tolworth, Surrey) was started in September, 1945, due to the efforts of two scientific workers and two film technicians. It has been impossible to get permission to use a cinema or a good hall, but audiences limited to 120 have shown great enthusiasm for 16 mm. showings of *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, *The Italian Straw Hat*, *Potemkin* and *The White Hell of Pitz Palu*. The last two were accompanied by special synchronised musical scores on discs devised by Mr. Stuart Keen. A show of scientific films and a large children's show have also been successfully organised by the Society. The second half of the season will include *The Edge of the World*, *The Blue Angel*, *The Covered Wagon*, *Film and Reality*, *Mor Vran*, *Children of the City* and *West Riding*.

The Harrow Technical School is organising a course of twelve lectures on film production, starting on January 14th. Speakers will include Paul Rotha, Cavalcanti, Jack Cardiff, the ace technicolor cameraman, William Alwyn and William Farr. The course costs £1. Applications to attend should be made to J. G. Platt, Harrow Technical School, Station Road, Harrow-on-the-Hill.

Beginning in the New Year, **The Scientific Film Association** will book films for member Scientific Film Societies. *The Canadian National Film Board* has presented copies of two 16 mm. nature films in colour to the S.F.A. for the exclusive use of its member societies.

The Central Film Library has found the original negative of *Drifters*. Copies will presently be available.

The New London Film Society screened *Intolerance* on December 17th. *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* was screened on January 6th.

The Slough Scientific Film Society held a gala show at Aspro Hall on December 14th, to raise funds. About £60 was collected.

The Cheltenham Film Society. The Society came into being at a public meeting held at the School of Art, Cheltenham, in April, 1945. The committee set up on that occasion worked for six months before overcoming the various obstacles which confronted it.

In December the committee booked the Coliseum Cinema for Sunday evening shows (one a month) and sub-standard screenings at the School of Art (two a month). During its short history it has presented five standard shows and over twenty sub-standard screenings.

The programme for the next four months consists of: *A Night at the Opera*, *Un Carnet de Bal*, *Grapes of Wrath*, *Le Dernier Milliardaire* (35 mm.); *Battleship Potemkin*, *The Lady Vanishes*, *Film and Reality*, *The Stars Look Down*, *Man of Aran*, *The Blue Angel*, *Spanish Earth*, and *The 49th Parallel* (16 mm.). The Society is affiliated to the British Film Institute and the Cheltenham Cultural Council. The membership now stands at 640. Enquiries are welcome, and should be addressed to the Hon. Secretary, C.F.S., School of Art, St. Margaret's Road, Cheltenham (Tel. 4639).

The Everyman Film Society. The Everyman Film Society was formed in October, 1945, to give people the chance to learn how films are made, to make them themselves, and, in this way, to adopt a more appreciative and critical attitude towards films in general. At its very successful first meeting the Hon. Anthony Asquith gave the audience an analytical survey of the development of film technique.

Animation in film was the subject of another very interesting talk, which was given by Mr. Francis Rodker, of Shell Film Unit, and further talks have been arranged for the rest of the season. Film shows too form part of the programme. *The Blue Angel* and *N. or N.W.* were received with great enthusiasm, and afterwards discussed over glasses of beer. The members of

(*continued on next page*)

Audience Research (*continued from page 7*)

"I have once or twice read the first few paragraphs of books on, I think they are called, Aerodynamics, but I've never fathomed anything out. After seeing this film I believe I know the fundamentals of the subject". A few, as might be expected, were negative: "The film would be of more interest in natural colour."

With all these considerations in mind, how far did we achieve the objects which prompted the test? As a "try-out" of a new film, it was interesting and valuable, because any direct contact with an audience is valuable to a film-maker; but it did not do more than confirm the need of certain adjustments in timing (the majority found the film on the slow side) which would, anyway, have been the natural outcome of a finalising stage in production. On the other hand, it did suggest that, if an enquiry were carried out on a wider basis over a longer period, instead of being rushed in at the tail-end of a production period, much worth-while information might emerge.

There is no doubt that some such direct contact with audiences is of increasing importance as educational films tend more and more to be made for showing to selected groups of people. It is apparent, however, as a consequence of this test, that the only approach likely to yield really useful results is to enlist the help of a number of audience groups in their own environment (schools, colleges, training establishments, etc.), so allowing an elaboration of the questionnaire and the carrying out of subsequent tests with the same audiences after suitable intervals. This would avoid the artificial atmosphere of the pre-view theatre or public cinema, which tends to produce, either an unusual (and therefore quite unreal) degree of concentration, or an attitude of frivolity.

This suggestion, of course, implies the use of completed films; for unfinished films, having sound and picture on separate lengths of film, cannot be run together on an ordinary projector —as they can on most pre-view theatre apparatus. This has not the disadvantages that appear at first sight. It is becoming the practice today to produce educational films in related series, from which it would be possible to select various typical series for testing in the place of single films. Although, in this case, the results of the test would lag, as it were, one film behind, the information could be available to the producers in time to influence the final shaping of each succeeding film in that series; and, also, be generally available as guidance in the undertaking of films of a similar nature. The work of preparing the questionnaires and summarising the results would be immense, but, on such a scale, it could be sponsored by a group of units, or interested bodies, and carried out by audience reaction specialists.

Useful surveys have, no doubt, been launched at various times in this country, but it is rarely that any hint of the findings have reached those making the films. A scheme sponsored by the makers themselves would ensure the results being available for all.

CORRESPONDENCE

SIR,

May I comment on the letter in the 50th issue of D.N.L. under the heading "Cry from the Colonies"?

The facts are these:

British News is edited by each of the Newsreel Companies in turn from items selected from their own make-ups by a small Committee.

If it is badly edited it is because the Newsreels themselves are badly edited.

Since I have been with the Council, I have seen all the issues and selected the items with the Committee. In my view—and I have been closely connected with the film presentation of news for six years—the issues of the last three months have been interesting and well knit together, and have presented the news from a British viewpoint.

Your correspondent is ill-informed when he complains of the "dreary slow nonsense" comparing it unfavourably with the ordinary British newsreel with a different title.

In the matter of title he is right. The main title is 51 feet in length (not 100 as your correspondent writes) and is indeed slow and ponderous, being accompanied by a somewhat unsuitable piece of music (in my view)—although it was written by an eminent composer of film music.

Almost the first thing I decided on arrival was to have a new and more suitable title made. But this waits until the future of *British News*, now rather uncertain, is decided.

The Newsreel Companies are anxious for us to stop it, and we don't wish to continue a day longer than is necessary.

But until the commercial reels can reach the Colonial Empire with the space of time now taken by British News to do so, the places concerned rely on this reel for their only source of British film news.

Your correspondent does not feel that *British News* is wanted. I can show you many letters and reports warmly supporting *British News* and asking for its continued distribution.

Director, Film Department, R. E. TRITTON
The British Council.

British News is circulated to the following countries: *Bahamas, British Honduras, Falkland Islands, Fiji, Gibraltar, Gold Coast, Leeward Islands, Mauritius, Nyasaland, Tanganyika, Tonga Islands, Uganda, Windward Islands, Zanzibar, U.S.S.R., Bermuda, Ceylon, Kenya, Nigeria, Aden, Barbados, British Guiana, Cyprus, Malta, Northern Rhodesia, Sierra Leone, Jamaica, St. Helena, Trinidad, Eire, Gambia, Panama, Seychelles, Southern Rhodesia, Spain, Palestine, South Africa, British Somaliland, East African Command (Kenya), Kenya Mobile Propaganda Unit, East African Forces in Ceylon, West African Forces in Middle East, East African Forces in Middle East.*

SIR,

In your last issue you published a letter from Mr. Brian Smith in which he made several criticisms of the Graded List of Films issued by the Scientific Films Committee of the Association of Scientific Workers. In view of the fact that most of the criticisms made are based on misconceptions, we feel that some reply is needed. We should like to deal with the points in the order in which they were raised.

The Committee considered that withdrawn films should be included, since many of the withdrawals were temporary war-time measures on the part of some distributors.

The gradings given to each film are certainly not "*personal*" opinions but are the recommendations of a panel consisting of qualified scientists, film technicians, and others. The appraisals have been carried out over a period of seven years starting in 1938, and during this period the composition of the Viewing Panel has inevitably changed, and at the same time their terms of reference have been modified in the light of experience gained. Obviously, under these conditions no absolute standard of criticism can be guaranteed and this may explain some gradings which Mr. Smith regards as "most extraordinary". The reference numbers in the list were issued chronologically and serve, therefore, to indicate the date of appraisal. Details of date of appraisal and the composition of the Viewing Panel for each film are filed at Head Office.

Mr. Smith writes: "What is more serious, however, is the whole host of films which find no mention in the catalogue. We must assume that they have been relegated to Grade 3, 'not recommended for any audience type'." This, of course, is quite wrong. If he had read the preface he would have seen it stated that "we wish to emphasise that no films are included . . . until they have been viewed by the Committee and other qualified scientists. The list is therefore not yet a complete record of all scientific films. . . ." There are indeed many films still to be viewed and supplements to the list are continually being issued. Many of the agricultural films mentioned by your correspondent have now been appraised and are included in a supplement which has just been issued. In a few months the list will be reprinted. The present list was recently made by amalgamating the original list and all subsequent supplements. Some inaccuracies have crept in, and in addition in our haste to issue the list to our branches in time for the winter season, many annoying typographical errors have passed uncorrected; for these we must apologise. It would be more helpful if users instead of rushing hastily into print, would inform the Committee of the inaccuracies they come across. For this we would be grateful.

Hon. Secretary, DEREK STEWART
Scientific Films Committee.

Film Societies (continued from previous page)

the Society are, with some exceptions, people who know little or nothing about film-making. Their enthusiasm for the talks, the film show, and for the shooting (on 16 mm. stock), which will take place later in the season, is more than sufficient evidence for the necessity for such a society. Unfortunately membership has to be limited, as only a small society could efficiently and fairly divide the work, and pleasure, of film-making among its members.

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